

News Release

U.S. Senators Pete Domenici & Jeff Bingaman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BACA RANCH PURCHASE BILL HEADED TO WHITE HOUSE

House Gives Bill Final Vote, Culminating Concerted Effort to Buy Ranch

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman today celebrated final congressional passage of bipartisan legislation authorizing federal purchase of New Mexico's Baca Ranch, a project they have jointly pushed through Congress.

The House of Representatives today voted, 377-45, to approve the **Valles Caldera National Preservation & Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act** (S.1892). The bill, which authorizes federal purchase of the 95,000-acre Baca Ranch and establishes important land management reforms, will now be sent to President Clinton to be signed into law.

"This is a wonderful day, finally clearing the way to bring the Baca Ranch into a public trust, saved it for generations to enjoy," Domenici said. "Getting to this point has not been easy, but the bipartisan cooperation we've had for a unique management arrangement for the ranch, coupled with needed land management reforms, has propelled us to this historic juncture."

"Forty years of efforts are reaching the home stretch with today's vote. This is truly an historic accomplishment," Bingaman said. "Opening the Baca is like giving New Mexico another jewel to be passed on for generations. As people finally have the opportunity to visit and enjoy the Valles Caldera, the value of its preservation will become eminently clear."

S.1892, developed in cooperation with the White House, was introduced in November by Domenici and Bingaman and passed the Senate in May. Representatives Heather Wilson and Tom Udall introduced an identical bill, HR 3288, in the House of Representatives.

With House passage of the Senate bill, the legislation is now clear to become law and complete the Forest Service purchase of the ranch and institute an innovative trustee arrangement for administration of the Jemez Mountain ranch. Congress last year set aside \$101 million for the purchase of the ranch.

In addition, the bill establishes a new federal land management policy dealing with federal lands designated for disposal and so-called "inholdings."